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RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 1269
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 1667
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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000072

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E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BUILDS RAPPORT WITH FM-DESIGNATE
ESPINOSA

Classified By: PolChief Erik Hall for reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador met with Foreign Minister-designate Maria Fernanda Espinosa on January 8. She agreed to meet with Commerce Secretary Gutierrez during the upcoming presidential inauguration, expressed hope Colombian President Uribe would attend, and shared GOE concern over perceived slights by the GOC. Discussing the dispute over aerial spraying of coca crops near the border, Espinosa conveyed conviction without the common overlay of hysterical nationalism. Overall, the meeting was very cordial, and the two pledged to maintain a frank and fluid channel of communication. End Summary.

Biographic Information

¶2. (SBU) Espinosa was born an Ecuadorian citizen in Salamanca, Spain, in 1964. She is a published poet and specialist in Amazon studies, environmental protection, and indigenous rights. A self-described innovator without formal diplomatic experience, she has been involved in international environmental issues and negotiation of biodiversity policy and indigenous rights under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Until recently she served as regional director of the World Conservation Union. She participated in U.S.-Ecuador negotiations over intellectual property and FTA environment provisions. She holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Geography from Rutgers Univ., earned under a Fulbright Scholarship. Espinosa won Ecuador's national poetry prize in ¶1990.

CoDel Reid a Success

¶3. (C) The one-on-one meeting was held in a private office that Espinosa is currently using at a local university. The Ambassador opened by thanking Espinosa for president-elect Correa's warm reception of CoDel Reid. Espinosa said she was pleasantly surprised with how long Correa chose to stay at the Ambassador's reception for the CoDel, after meeting with them earlier in the day and given other commitments that she knew he had that evening. She expressed appreciation for the CoDel's message of openness on ATPDEA renewal and migration reform.

Willing to Help with Inauguration

¶4. (C) Espinosa, who will also assume the functions of Trade Minister under Correa's reorganization plan, said she very much wanted to meet with Used chief for the Correa inauguration, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez. She would be especially interested to learn about USG trade modalities that had been proposed by Uruguay and Bolivia that fall short of a traditional FTA, she said. Confirming a meeting for the Used with president-elect Correa would be complicated by Correa's very frenetic schedule during those two days and coordinating requests from other delegations headed by chiefs of state, she said, but she would do her best to arrange it.

Institutional Vision

¶5. (C) Asked about her priorities as FM, Espinosa said they include new approaches on Ecuadorian migration ("not just to the U.S. but worldwide"), including creating a new migration unit within MFA and staffing it with both diplomats and representatives from outside the diplomatic service. Another priority would be to achieve better MFA coordination of foreign assistance to Ecuador. The Ambassador explained the Administration's immigration reform proposals. The Ambassador also offered to arrange briefings for the new minister and her team on our development assistance programs as well as on U.S. counter-narcotics efforts, and Espinosa accepted the offer.

Open to Discussion

¶6. (C) Turning to more contentious issues, the Ambassador expressed concern that Correa had declared, during the

meeting with CoDel Reid, that the U.S. only had military "bases" in Guantanamo, Puerto Rico and Manta, in this hemisphere. She explained that we have Forward Operating Locations (not bases) here, in El Salvador and Curacao, which of course form a corridor around Colombia, and asked that she convey this information to the President so that he could avoid this mistake in the future. Espinosa appreciated the information, and pledged to share the clarification with Correa.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador raised the topics of extradition and visa revocations for public corruption, saying the USG will continue to be helpful to Ecuador in combating corruption. She explained that we sincerely wish to rid our country of corrupt and unwelcome guests. But to do so requires GOE cooperation, including documentation of extraditable offenses in high-profile cases such as that of the fugitive Isaias brothers. The Ambassador wanted the Correa administration to understand that, contrary to some press accounts pinning blame for inaction on the U.S., movement on that and other cases is currently pending necessary steps from the GOE. Espinosa was interested in this information and affirmed President-elect Correa's commitment to be very tough on corruption. She noted that she would be briefed on the issue by MFA staff shortly.

Colombia Relations Need Improvement

¶8. (C) Prefacing a new subject by noting that the U.S. is not directly involved in the issue, Espinosa expressed concern about Ecuador's strained relations with Colombia. This is an issue she knows about personally, she said, having worked extensively in the border region, especially in the Amazon region.

¶9. (C) The GOE really wants President Uribe to attend the Correa inauguration, she said, and hopes to put the relationship on a stronger footing in the wake of the current disagreement over fumigation of coca crops along the border. She reiterated the GOE contention that its request to the GOC to negotiate joint terms of reference for an international

study on the health effects of glyphosate spraying along the border region has gone unanswered for months and that Ecuador's draft proposal for a binational border development plan has also had no response.

Comment

¶10. (C) Espinosa conveyed personal warmth, intelligence, and an engagingly informal style. While clearly an admirer of out-going career diplomat Carrion and generally in line with his left-of-center and nationalistic world-view, she may actually be less rigidly dogmatic on some issues than he has been. On Colombia she conveyed strong conviction that glyphosate is harmful, and that spraying should stop, but coupled that with an understanding that the relationship is bigger than this issue and needs to be repaired. Espinosa's lack of direct diplomatic experience is already raising predictable hackles in the MFA, where diplomats fear a loss of institutional credibility and lament Carrion's departure. Espinosa's personal charm will help her win allies domestically and abroad, but she faces a daunting challenge in guiding her impulsive boss.

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